

DCS Removes Five Children From Home
Allegations of Abuse Investigated By Local Office

Scott County - Tennessee Department of Children's Services investigators removed five children from a Scott County home on August 3, 2004, and are working expeditiously to investigate severe physical abuse and neglect allegations against the parents, Aaron and Linda Mann, who were DCS foster parents.

The oldest of the five children removed is presently hospitalized due to injuries of physical abuse, the remaining four are now in a DCS foster home and undergoing physical evaluations and interviews to determine if they were also abused or neglected. The five children, one female and four males, range in age from 11 to 14 years old and are not biologically related, but all were placed with the Mann's as foster children and subsequently legally adopted by the Mann's.

The Mann's currently do not have any foster children in their home and have been closed as a DCS foster home.

Investigations were initiated on three occasions during the past three years involving these children while residing in the Mann home.

- January 2004, all five children in the home were interviewed due to concerns of nutritional neglect. Medical reports were received on three of the children and school officials and a psychologist were consulted, but there was insufficient evidence to support the children were being neglected.
- April 2003, allegations were received and investigated regarding two children being physically abused. All five children and Mr. and Mrs. Mann were interviewed. Case records indicate information was received from school officials and a medical opinion was ascertained, however, there was no evidence to support the allegations and the case was closed as unfounded.
- September 2001, a physical abuse complaint was received about one of the children, however, a medical examination was obtained that did not confirm child abuse. During this particular investigation, the child was interviewed, as well as other children in the home, school officials and the Mann's. This case was also unfounded due to a lack of evidence and was closed.

Miller said that a child who is dependent on a foster or adoptive family to provide for their physical and emotional needs, often will have great difficulty in disclosing abuse if they fear reprisal or retribution, especially children who were abused in the past and are isolated from the community.

Additionally, there were two calls made to DCS in January 2001 alleging neglect, which was handled by the foster care case manager. Another report alleging neglect was received in January 2004, which was not appropriate for investigation, and in June 2004, an anonymous caller reported concerns but the allegations were not assigned due to lack of information.

"It appears that DCS investigators conducted thorough investigations, however they were unable to gather conclusive information to indicate abuse. It is difficult to prove a 'gut feeling' in a court room," said Miller. "It is clear that numerous people were concerned for the safety of these children. I am saddened that these children had to endure this but I am grateful that they are safe and no other children will be subjected to such treatment in this home."

Case recordings indicate the investigators gathered information from numerous professionals including teachers, mental health and medical experts, and a speech pathologist. In addition to the investigators, other DCS case managers had repeated contact with the children. Case managers had over 35 visits with the children from January 2003-July 2003. During the January 2004 investigation, a supervisor accompanied the investigator to assist in interviewing the children and later an adoption case manager followed up with a home visit to ensure the children were safe in the home.